

## Community resources

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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 10KUALALUMPUR20, WHAT IS GOING ON IN MALAYSIA?

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

**#10KUALALUMPUR20.**

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">10KUALALUMPUR20</a>	<a href="#">2010-01-12 09:08</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Kuala Lumpur</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.malaysia-today.net/mtcolumns/41044-wikileaks-what-is-going-on-in-malaysia>

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3678  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000020

SIPDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR FOR EAP A/S CAMPBELL, ACTING A/S  
DONOVAN, DAS MARCIEL AND DRL PDAS GLAZE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2020  
TAGS: [MY](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: WHAT IS GOING ON IN MALAYSIA?

REF: A. KUALA LUMPUR 014 UPDATE ON THE ALLAH ISSUE  
[1](#)B. KUALA LUMPUR 011 OVERNIGHT ATTACKS ON THREE  
CHURCHES  
[1](#)C. KUALA LUMPUR 03 GOM APPEALS KUALA LUMPUR HIGH  
COURT RULING  
[1](#)D. 09 KUALA LUMPUR 716 CANING PUNISHMENT POSTPONED

¶1. (C) Two fundamental issues arise in connection with the Malaysian authorities' handling of the "Allah" case in which a Malaysian court has ruled unconstitutional the Najib Administration's effort to ban the use of the word "Allah" by a Catholic newspaper, publishing in both English and Malaysian.

#### Freedom of Religion

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¶2. (C) Despite its extensive efforts to reassure expatriate and foreign audiences, the Malaysian Government has focused only on protection of property and persons, foregoing an opportunity to make a clear statement on the maintenance of freedom of religion in the country.

#### Rule of Law and the Independence of the Judiciary

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¶3. (C) The Najib Administration's intervention has not been solely to promote and protect order and social stability. The Government has underlined the tenuous nature of judicial independence in the country by intervening to arrange a stay of the judge's order that the Catholic publication was allowed to use the word "Allah" in its vernacular text. Moreover, the Administration has arranged a series of public comments from figures of authority ranging from the King to the Sultan of Selangor conveying to Malaysian citizens the clear message that the authorities are opposed to the judge's decision and do not foresee a time when the Government would retreat from its ban of the use of the word "Allah" in Catholic or other Christian publications.

¶4. (C) The Administration's unwillingness to stand clearly for freedom of religion and the forthright application of legitimate judicial power, even when it is less than palatable to UMNO, the ruling party, is of concern. That is particularly the case given the imminent trial of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim set to begin on January 25. There has long been conflict between the ruling party's commitment in principle to freedom of religion and toleration of diverse views in practice. Christians and Hindus, especially, find it hard in some states at some times to build places of worship or keep them from being plowed under in the name of development. Chinese Buddhist temples are less problematic for the established federal and state powers. Jewish places of worship are strictly forbidden. Similarly, the Malaysian authorities do not respect in practice the independence of the judiciary, at least not on a consistent basis in which an opponent to the ruling party can depend on justice being served.

¶5. (C) There remains a debate in Malaysia as to whether the Prime Minister genuinely intends to enact significant political reform or, alternatively, whether he is merely giving lip service to reform objectives so as to coax as many conservative Malay voters as possible back into warm embrace of the ruling party after mass defections in the March, 2008 elections. There is evidence that his Administration wishes to liberalize the economy and recognizes the concomitant requirement to achieve at least a minimal level of political reform. He has spoken openly about the need to revise the New Economic Policy, which embodies affirmative action provisions for the majority Malays and is the target of opposition and popular criticism because it establishes the equivalent of second-class citizenship for the roughly one-third of Malaysia's population that is either ethnic Chinese or Indian. Najib has similarly taken small steps to open up the economy and is on record suggesting the country must change or perish.

¶6. (C) But his failure thus far to record much in the way of tangible results, beyond more forward-looking and liberal rhetoric, leads to popular suspicion. The conventional wisdom among most non-ruling coalition Chinese and Indians, for example, seems to be that the ruling party has

orchestrated the "Allah" issue so as to increase support among Malay voters by fomenting division between Muslims on one side and Christians or secularists on the other in the opposition coalition. Few in the opposition credit the Government with a sincere commitment to freedom of religion or the rule of law. They may go too far in their distrust of the Government's motives and they may give the Government too much credit in its purported ability to organize conspiracies, but the popular view is widely and deeply held among non-Malay, non-Muslims that the Government is antagonistic toward other religions and is engaged in a long-term effort to expand Islam's primacy in Malaysian society.

17. (C) Najib's public relations efforts to downplay differences among the races and religions and promote the concepts of toleration and moderation notwithstanding, he appears to have hardened popular views since the advent of his Administration given the steps hardliners in the ruling party have forced on their fellow UMNO members. The Kartika caning case and the cow-head incident (ref D), and a number of less prominent news events involving constraints on the practice of religious freedom have firmed up the views of those already in opposition. It is difficult to say at this point how this latest controversy will affect the ongoing priority on the ruling party's part to woo back ethnic Malays before another general election must be held by 2013. But it is clear that there are limits as to how far Najib will go to earn the characterization of Malaysia as a moderate voice in the Muslim world. We should adjust expectations accordingly, and we will have to monitor closely the next likely test of Najib's political will, namely Anwar Ibrahim's January 25 trial.

KEITH